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Stillness and Occurrence/Things

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David Williams is an Edinburgh-based visual artist whose work has been widely exhibited and published. Reader in Photography at Edinburgh College of Art, he is the recipient of a number of awards including the BBC Television 150 Years of Photography Prize. In the context of his interest in non-duality, over recent years he has undertaken a number of projects in Japan.

www.davidwilliamsphotographer.com



Gitanjali & Beyond

David Williams, Stillness and Occurrence

Artist's Statement

‘... the world in its essence is a reconciliation of opposing forces.’

Rabindranath Tagore

Although familiar with a range of texts in the field of Eastern spirituality and philosophy, prior to compiling this submission I had not read anything by Rabindranath Tagore. For some years now my visual arts practice has been concerned with that most ineffable of notions – non-duality. In this context I have encountered a variety of deeply inspiring writings which had a significant impact on the content and form of my output.

Reading Tagore for the first time amounted to sheer delight on my part. I concentrated mainly on *Sadhana – The Realisation of Life* and found strong resonances with the ideas underpinning my practice. Informative, intensely lyrical and impressively ‘user friendly’ on complex topics, the text persuaded me to revisit a body of work I completed in 2000 - *Stillness and Occurrence*.

I think the coupling of apposite quotes from Tagore with the photographic images illuminates the context of my original project and indeed affords it a new, expanded lease of life. I found the process both exhilarating and humbling in equal measure.

I have also submitted a related, single-piece project completed very recently. Again the work is paired with Tagore’s words and takes the form of a ‘concrete poem’.

Tagore’s writing clearly evidences the workings of a mind capable of combining established religious thinking with developments in philosophy, science, the arts and beyond. In this respect, many of his pronouncements have proved remarkably prescient and highly relevant to modern day culture.

As a contemporary artist interested in non-duality I owe an enormous debt to the likes of Tagore and feel privileged to have been exposed to his work.

project one

Stillness and Occurrence

... life itself is optimistic: it wants to go on.



Everything has this dualism of maya and satyam, appearance and truth... Our self is maya where it is merely individual and finite, where it considers its separateness as absolute; it is satyam where it recognises its essence in the universal and the infinite, in the supreme self, in paramatman.

*... these undulations and vibrations, these risings and fallings,
are not due to the erratic contortions of disparate bodies,
they are a rhythmic dance.*



Essentially man is not a slave either of himself or of the world; but he is a lover.

... the surprise of endless variations, the advent of the unaccountable, the ceaseless procession of individuals, each of whom is without parallel in creation.



... this most startling of all paradoxes, that the One appears as many, that the appearance is the opposite of truth and yet is inseparably related to it.



Only love is motion and rest in one.



The touch of an infinite mystery passes over the trivial and the familiar... symbols aching with meaning...



... every moment carries its message of the eternal...



*For here rolls the sea, and even here lies the other shore waiting to be reached
- yes, here is this everlasting present, not distant, not anywhere else.*

project two

... we find that the separateness of objects is in a fluid state.
Their individualities are even changing, they are meeting and merging
into each other, till science itself is turning into metaphysics,
matter losing its boundaries and the definition of life
becoming more and
more indefinite.

t h i n g s

All quotes are from *Sadhana - The Realisation of Life* by Rabindranath Tagore
Macmillan New York 2015

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